

RESEARCH NETWORKS N° 21  
Social Theory



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Warfare as a driving Historical Force*

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HISTORICAL FORCE**

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**Paper to be presented at the European Sociological Association Biannual  
Meeting September, 2003, Murcia.**

## **THE 'WARFARE-PARADIGM' IN HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY: WARFARE AS A DRIVING HISTORICAL FORCE**

Lars Bo Kaspersen

During the history of social sciences a central concern has been how to understand social change and social reproduction of *society*. The major social theorists such as Marx, Weber, Tönnies, Durkheim, and Simmel have stressed various 'causes' in their explanations of structural transformation of society. Weber mentions processes of rationalization; class struggle and growth of forces of production is stressed by Marx; social differentiation by Simmel and demographic change and the division of labour by Durkheim. These general processes are mainly circumstances originating within society and the central concern has been to examine how these processes affect the social structures of national societies. In contrast to these otherwise predominant types of explanations we find several theoretical perspectives with an emphasis on state and warfare as driving forces in history. Most of these theories had their hey-days at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars such as E.H. Carr, H. Morgenthau, O. Hintze, M. Weber, F. Oppenheimer, H. Spencer and H. Mackinder came from very different traditions within social science but they were all stressing the importance of warfare in order to understand social change. Several of these theories lost popularity especially after Second World War. Only 'the realists' within international relations (Morgenthau and Carr) remained in business with some explanatory power. The rest lost out. Like the classical social theorists Marx, Durkheim, and Simmel most social theory in the post-war period neglected war and state and concentrated on the study of society and endogenous societal processes only. Over the last three decades an increasing number of historical sociologists have accentuated the importance of warfare as a key to understand social order and social change.<sup>1</sup> Reconsideration and strengthening of the 'warfare-paradigm' is to be welcomed since the neglect of war as a social force has severe implications for understanding state and society (see e.g. Giddens 1985, Tilly 1992, Mann 1986, 1993). The more recent 'warfare paradigm' is closely intertwined

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<sup>1</sup> For a 'warfare explanations' of social change see for example Tilly (1975, 1992), Giddens (1985), Dandeker 1990), Mann (1986, 1988, 1993), Creighton & Shaw (eds) (1987), Shaw (1984), Downing (1992), Ertmann (1997), Burke (1997), Manicas (1989), Skocpol (1979), Porter (1994), Van Creveld (1999), Drake (2002), and Bobbitt (2002). Among historians we more often find warfare explanations but often without strong theoretical reflections of the key concepts war, state and social change. Most recently a large number of interesting books authored by historians on the subject has come out. See for example Glete (2000, 2002), Rose (2002), and Wawro (2000),

with a 'state paradigm'. War is a distinct form of conflict. 'War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale...War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will' (Clausewitz 1993 [1832]: 83). War is social relationship and often it is a social activity taking place between states. The 'warfare paradigm' in historical sociology concentrates on the relationship between warfare and social change. In particular, the attention has been given to examine how inter-state warfare affects the structures of the state, the society and the state-society-relationship. Thus the key concepts are war and state.

This article contains five propositions:

- I. The omission of war and political organized violence in social theory can be seen as an outcome of the embeddedness of social theory and sociology in particular in liberalism and Marxism. Liberalism and Marxism are both ideologies, which promise us world without violence. Michael Mann (1988) and more recently Hans Joas in this issue of *Distinktion* have pointed to this explanation. Here I agree but it must be added that the neglect of warfare in social theory also originates in a specific conceptualisations of society – the key concept in classical social theory. Society is seen a fusion of its internal elements. The predominant understanding of society has involved a problematic conceptualisation of the state as an entity derived from society. Therefore the state and its activities will always be a reflection of the conflicts and interests dominating in society. The state cannot be conceived as an autonomous actor separated from society pursuing its own interests. Moreover, a fusion understanding of society and state has led to a neglect of warfare.
- II. The 'warfare theorists' develop their contributions in opposition to those theories that neglect the impact of warfare on social change. The more recent 'warfare theorists' 'bring back the state'. The state is reconceptualized in order to emphasize the autonomy of the state and the interrelated process of 'war-making' and 'state-making'.
- III. Despite the attempt of the more recent 'warfare theorists' to redefine the state in order to bring in warfare as a driving force these theorists do not succeed in overcoming the problems of the concepts of society and state in classical (and more recent) social theory. The 'warfare theorists' remain embedded in what here is called the fusion understanding of state and society. The state is 'in the last instance' derived from society.

IV. The problematic configuration of the state embedded in a fusion model entails a poorly defined and a problematic conceptualization of war. Since the state is regarded as an entity in continuation of society warfare is seen as a result of state action but actions motivated by forces within society. The concept of war in the works of Charles Tilly, Anthony Giddens, Michael Mann, Brian Downing, and others is inspired by the first wave of ‘war theorists’ or 19<sup>th</sup> century Nietzschean philosophy. The understanding of warfare among the first wave of ‘warfare theorists’ around the turn of the previous century (Herbert Spencer, Franz Oppenheimer, Otto Hintze) is strongly related to some form of a Darwinist struggle of existence. Unfortunately, modern ‘warfare theory’ unintentionally seems to carry some unexplained elements of a variant of Darwinism and/or Nietzschean philosophy. Warfare as a social phenomenon is observed and it plays an important role in the theories. It is, however, rarely explained why war is such a persistent phenomena. It often appears to be ‘natural’ and a faculty of human beings.

V. We need to develop a theory of state that partly avoids falling into the lacuna of a fusion model of state and society and partly is interrelated with a more robust theory of warfare without any social Darwinistic or Nietzschean undertones. This article suggests that we have to move towards a fission theory in which state and war are conceptualised as relational concepts. The state is constituted and consolidated in a mutual struggle of recognition. This struggle can result in war. War is not defined as an attribute of the state or a result of the actions of the state but it is inherent in the very relationship between states. War is a relationship involving two opponents. The mutual struggle of recognition between two states can in the last instance lead to war. The theoretical perspective brought forward in this article is inspired by a rereading of G.W.F. Hegel, Carl von Clausewitz and Carl Schmitt.

This article can be seen as an attempt to remedy some of the shortcomings in social theory which Joas refers to in his contribution to this issue: an attempt to understand the existence of violence and war and its impact on social change and social reproduction. In particular, as Joas observes, warfare as state-organized violence is hardly discussed in the large majority of social theory. In my emphasis of the value of among others Clausewitz, Hegel and Schmitt I put myself at risk of falling into the problems mentioned by Joas of being bellicose, social Darwinistic, focused on power politics and reinforcing a mythology of violence. As I shall argue, however, a theory of state and warfare based upon these thinkers can take us a step forward and address some of Joas’ concerns.

In the following I shall set off with a brief critique of the concepts of society and state in social theory. The purpose is to provide the context for the discussion of the key concepts in the work of the 'warfare theorists'. The next section introduces to the various 'warfare theories'. In particular, the article gives weight to the more recent theories here named as the 'the 'new' historical 'state' sociologists (Skocpol, Tilly, Mann, Giddens, Elias). Finally, I shall outline a theory of fission based upon Hegel, Clausewitz and Schmitt.

### ***The Problem of Society and State: the Society and State as a Fusion of Elements***

Most theories conceive state and society in very similar terms. Society is seen as preceding the state, as a result of a group of individuals or classes merging or fusing into a single entity - a society. Then the state is installed as a political and administrative superstructure necessary to maintain law and order, protection, administration and infrastructure. The state and its society are demarcated entities. Other demarcated states/societies coexist next to them. Why state and societies are demarcated and how it has happened are two questions that are rarely addressed and rarely theoretically explained by most theories. An example is the Hobbesian model of society and state in which a group of individuals enter into a contract and transfer power to the state. Why do not all individuals of the world make one single contract and one world state? The logical consequence of Hobbes' model would be a global contract with one Leviathan but not even Hobbes anticipated that as a possibility. Why is the world divided into several societies and states? Hobbes and most of the thinkers from the late Renaissance and onwards never question this problem. All theories simply presuppose that the globe is covered by a multiple number of states and societies separated by borders or frontiers. What determines this division is hardly ever questioned (Kaspersen 1994; 2000).

Thus this conception of state and society has two major problems. First, it cannot account for the problem of separation of societies. How come the world is divided into separate states and societies? Why not one single contract between all people in the world? The second problem concerns the theoretical implications of this theory. If the state is a result of an internal fusion, the state is conceived as an entity prior to the system of states. The state is taken as given, and only at this stage can relations between states or societies be understood.

States form *systems* to the extent that they interact, and to the degree that their interaction significantly affects each party's fate. Since states always grow out of

competition for control of territory and population, they invariably appear in clusters, and usually form systems ... States form a system to the extent that they interact with each other regularly, and to the degree that their interaction affects the behavior of each state (emphasis as in original) (Tilly 1992:4, 162)

As demonstrated in this quotation the conception of a fusion model of state and society implies that the fundamental features of the state system are a result of interacting states. A conception of states based on the fusion of individuals, classes, modes of production, etc. implies that social change is mainly regarded as a consequence of internal processes, for example class struggle, rationalization, technological changes, individual agency, or social movements fighting for rights. Warfare, too, is considered as a result of action of the states. Usually peace is regarded as the normal and dominant feature of the state system but occasionally war breaks out following changes within a state leading to a threat of other states.

In other words, this conception of state and state system has some inherent problems in explaining social change and social reproduction. The processes of change and reproduction derived from the very state *system* itself (the relations between states) and with immense consequences for the states and their internal relations cannot be explained or understood adequately from a fusion perspective. In the latter the external relations between the states are regarded as a result of the conduct and action performed by the states and not as a consequence of the relation between states. Moreover, a phenomenon like warfare with its implications for social change is often ignored or at best only underrated by most of the traditional social theories such as Marxism, functionalism/liberalism or action theory. We have to turn to other theories such as certain schools within the so-called historical sociology or international relations if warfare as an important aspect of social change has to be taken seriously. However, as I will demonstrate later, neither of these theories solve our other problem with the fallacies of the fusion perspective. Most historical sociologists as well as international relation theorist still regard states as preceding the system and war as a result of state action.

Thus, to sum up, in addition to the inherent theoretical problem of the separation and demarcation issue, the fusion perspectives cannot provide an adequate explanation of social change and social reproduction - especially, the importance of warfare and the external relations between states are ignored.

## *Theories of the State and Warfare*

A range of theories has attempted to avoid some of the problems embedded in fusion theories concerning demarcation, evolutionism, and a “narrow” conception of social change and continuity. These theories are very heterogeneous but they share some common features, for example, they consider the state as an autonomous actor, and more weight is given to the importance of state-state relations including state-organized violence. For analytical purposes I have categorized them in the following way:

- ◆ International relations theories (especially realism and neo-realism)
- ◆ The German school (Oppenheimer, Weber, Hintze)
- ◆ Geopolitical theories (Mahan, MacKinder, Spykman, Kjellén)
- ◆ The militarist-social Darwinists (Gumplovitz, Ratzel, Spencer)
- ◆ “Neo-institutionalist” perspectives (e.g. Meyer, Ramirez, Boli, Thomas)
- ◆ The “new” historical “state” sociologists (Tilly, Giddens, Mann, Elias, Skocpol, Poggi, Downing, Shaw)
- ◆ The fission-theoretical perspective (Hegel, Clausewitz, Schmitt)

This range of theories attempts to go beyond the problems in the fusion or endogenous conception of state and society. In the following I shall very briefly pinpoint some of the strong elements I find in these theories and also indicate some of their problems. Due to limited space I concentrate on the most explicit sociological theories. Thus I have left out international relations theories, geopolitical theories and the ‘neo-institutionalist’ perspective. The two former are not distinctively sociological and the latter does not approach the problem of warfare as such.

### *The German School*

First I shall examine the German School of state theorists who is a heterogeneous group of scholars who worked in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several scholars could be mentioned in this context, but I will mention three of the most important: Franz Oppenheimer, Max Weber, and Otto Hintze. In contrast to other contemporary sociologists in Germany and elsewhere at the time, they had a strong focus on the state and also the military function of the state.



Franz Oppenheimer (1864-1943) argued that the state came about as a result of conquest and plunder. He claims that every state in history has been a state of classes, that is a polity of superior and inferior social groups, based on distinctions either of rank or of property.

The State may be defined as an organization of one class dominating over the other classes. Such a class organization can come about in one way only, namely through conquest and the subjection of ethnic groups by the dominating group ... The State, completely in its genesis, essentially and almost completely during the first stages of its existence, is a social institution, forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of regulating the dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad. Teleologically, this dominion had no other purpose than the economic exploitation of the vanquished by the victors (Oppenheimer 1975:xxvii, 8).

Oppenheimer's theory is based on the anthropology that one single force impels all life: the tendency to provide for life, "bifurcated into hunger and love ... a struggle of existence" (ibid.:11). Oppenheimer said that two types of opposed means are used to satisfy desires, namely work = economic means, and robbery = political means. World history is seen as a struggle between economic and political means. No state emerged until the economic means has created a definite "number of objects for the satisfaction of needs, which objects may be taken away or appropriated by warlike robbery" (ibid.:13). The state is an organization of political means. He analyses state development through six stages and the state is completed when it

develops the habit of rule and usages of government. The two groups separated to begin with, and then united on the one territory, are at first merely laid alongside one another, then are scattered through one another ... Soon the bonds of relationship unite the upper and the lower strata ... In form and in content the primitive state is completed (ibid.:31).

Oppenheimer distinguishes between different state forms (the primitive feudal state, the maritime state, the feudal state, the constitutional state). Domination characterizes all state forms, but he sees a steady progress in the development of the state. Domination and exploitation in the constitutional state are limited by public law and hidden by ideology. His idea of progressivity even included the belief that the state would culminate in the state of freemen's citizenship, where the class would disappear and economic means replace political means (ibid.:102-8).

Oppenheimer predated some of the ideas included in other state theories such as the realist perspective with his emphasis on the Darwinian struggle of existence. However, he places the state in a historical context and puts it into an evolutionary perspective. He does not transcend the fusion perspective because he never poses nor answers the question of why societies are separated from each other from the beginning and, moreover, why states also become demarcated entities. When plunder and conquest are an intrinsic part of state development we need an explanation of why the world never ends up being one single state.

The next scholar in this “wave” of thinkers is Max Weber (1864- 1920). I will only deal with him briefly since a more extensive account of his state theory is outlined elsewhere in my work (Kaspersen forthcoming). Weber defines the state as a ruling political community or organization existing within a given territory and safeguarded by the threat and application of physical force by an administrative staff that successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order (Weber 1978:54). Thus Weber emphasizes the territorial and violence aspects of the state much stronger than many of the other “founding fathers” of sociology like Durkheim, Simmel and Marx. Weber’s definition is, however, still bound up in the endogenous conception of the state. The state is still regarded as an amalgamation of individuals and their actions. Weber’s definition including territory and violence implies, however, that there must be “another.” No other state can possess the monopoly of violence within a territory already claimed by one state. Weber tacitly presupposes that a state must coexist with other states in a state system. The state has a neighbor that might be an enemy. Unfortunately, Weber never pursues this problem theoretically, and we are still left with the puzzle of why a certain group of people has their social actions demarcated by a specific state within a specific territory.

In his political sociology, however, several empirical examples show that states are autonomous powers struggling and using force in the state system. They have “a will to power.”<sup>2</sup> He has some observations about the use of force: “All political structures use force, but they differ in the manner in which and the extent to which they use or threaten to use it against other political organizations. These differences play a specific role in determining the form and destiny of political communities” (Weber 1978:910). These reflections demonstrate that the struggle and use of force are determined by the states and their “will to power.” It is not an inherent part of the *relations* between the states which I shall claim is the key to an understanding of the state. In sum, his

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Weber (1978: vol. 2, 910-12); and also W.J. Mommsen (1984).

political sociology takes him a step further than most fusion theorists, but he remains caught within the same framework.

Whereas Max Weber can be regarded as a sociologist with a strong historical bias, Otto Hintze (1861-1940) was rather a historian with a strong sociological bias. In contrast to most of the historians at the time he was interested in historical method. His main inspiration was Clausewitz, but he was also inspired by Marx, Comte, and Spencer although he never believed strictly in the existence of historical laws. However, he accepted that general patterns could be found in the development of European history (Gilbert 1980:15). The famous dictum about war as a continuation of politics led Hintze to examine the relationship between the military and the political. According to Hintze military organization and political structure had to correspond to each other and had to be integrated in order to achieve the necessary coordination of war and politics (Hintze 1975:180-215; Gilbert 1980:14). This interest took him to the state.

Hintze never gives any extended and precise definition of the state. His writings show that the state has an institutional as well as a functional dimension. Originally, he claims, all states were military organizations, organizations for war. "Large groups of people united in the more solid structure of the state, primarily for defensive and offensive purposes. Out of this martial organization there first developed a more severe government with coercive power over individuals, and it increased in strength the more frequently wars were waged" (Hintze 1975:181). The genesis of the state results from "war, colonization, conquest and peaceful settlement, through amalgamation of different parts and through their separating from each other..." (ibid.:161). He never really explains why war is such a persistent feature of human societies. He just sees it is a fact and thus states had to be formed. Nor does he clarify the difference between defensive and offensive wars. Why did people unite and form a state for offensive purposes? Is aggression deeply embedded in human nature? Do we possess a "will to power"? Or?

Hintze's work is important because he situates the state in a state system, and he takes foreign policy and external relations between states seriously in explaining domestic affairs. In 1902 he wrote,

It is often held that the growth and change of a political constitution are dependent on the social developments within society: it is conditioned by the changing power relations among the different social classes, which succeed each other in dominating the character of the régime or at least influencing the government. Karl Marx regarded the class struggle as the great driving force behind all historical events; and many

observers, even if in general they would shrink from such one-sided approach, have felt unable to deny that a people's political constitution is in effect shaped by its social structure. There is of course a germ of truth in this; but one point is overlooked - namely, the development of the state in relation to its neighbours.

The formation and the demarcation of the state's territory within which the social developments take place - briefly, alternations in the external existence of a state - have their bearing on its internal structure. Basically, the external existence of state and people is regarded as a fixed and immutable quality. Interest has tended to center on the social changes that occur within this set framework, changes that are then deemed responsible for the alteration of the political institutions. This is, in effect, to wrench each single state from the context in which it was formed; the state is seen in isolation, exclusive in itself, without raising the question whether its peculiar character is co-determined by its relation to its surroundings (Hintze 1975:159).

Hintze rejects that class struggle or the working of individualities and individual factors can account for the variety in state forms and institutional structures. Of course, class struggles and social tensions affect the state's internal politics. He argues that these aspects account for the growth and change of a constitution, but it is the external conflicts between states that shape the state. "I am assuming this "shape" to mean - by contrast with internal social development - the external configuration, the size of the state, its contiguity (whether strict or loose), and even its ethnic composition" (ibid.:160). In sum, he stresses the external factors at the expense of the internal conflicts, but he does not deny or totally ignore that internal changes within society affect the state and the state form. Especially in his later writing, the military factor is regarded as only one of the factors that shape the political order: socio-economic and ideological forces also play a decisive role (Gilbert 1980:17).

In his comparative study of state and state forms during history, he was inspired by Oppenheimer and, particularly, by Weber. He clearly presented his thesis that the political structure depended on military needs. He admitted that historical changes usually have a great variety of causes (Hintze 1975:163), but the conflicts and wars between states are the chief cause of the development in military organizations and political institutions. Different state forms and different types of war create different types of military and political institutions.

These ideas developed by Hintze have been a major source of inspiration for several "new" historical sociologists such as Michael Mann, Brian Downing, and Anthony Giddens. Hintze

contributes with several important ideas and he deserves credit for his work. However, I have some reservations, because implicitly an almost social Darwinian figure looms large in Hintze's work. Human beings are striving for power in order to survive in the struggle of the fittest. War is a result of states struggling. Also, as already indicated, he has the problem with the demarcation of the state. Why does a specific group of people decide to become separated from another group? Why is the world divided into many states? In other words, he never completely evades the fusion perspective.

### ***The Militarist and Social Darwinist thinkers***

The next group of thinkers - the militarist and social Darwinist thinkers such as Gumplowitz, Ratzenhofer, and Spencer - are included here because they also saw the state as an autonomous actor, although in an extremely aggressive version. Yet they became influential.

In this context the term social Darwinism refers to theories that claim that social organization is or is like a living organism, that societies undergo developmental changes, and that such sequences of evolution are or can be progressive (Carver 1993:587). Moreover, thinkers like Spencer developed the idea that the development of societies resembled natural evolution, but in social Darwinism evolution was transformed into a competition among various groups (races, nations, ethnic groups or classes). It became a struggle of survival - the principle of the "survival of the fittest." These ideas emerged in the 19th century and preceded Darwin. Some of them were reinforced by Darwin, because his later works, *The Descent of Man* in particular, were open to this more dubious reading and understanding of evolution and natural selection in nature.<sup>3</sup>

Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909) represented this trend in the late 19th century. He believed in evolution as the survival of the fittest. Men pursue economic goals and because human groups are ethnocentric by nature, they attempt to kill and exterminate outsiders and take their possessions, and only the strongest and fittest will survive this struggle. After the extermination of enemies the group of humans who is the "fittest" will found a state as a set of permanent legal and political institutions. Over time these conquest relations will settle down and a social stratification emerges.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) is probably the most important and well known evolutionist and social Darwinist. Spencer preferred the term "society" and he saw an evolution of societies from

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to emphasize that Darwin's own theory of the evolution of species as it appears in '*The Origin of Species*' is a genuine theory of biological evolution whereas his other book '*The Descent of Man*' was an attempt to create a theory of history based upon the idea of biological evolution. The latter attempt opens up for many readings and it provided a playground for the so-called 'social Darwinists'.

very simple to very complex and differentiated. He also used another typology to categorize human evolution. Here he distinguished between military and industrial societies. War and conquest were the main driving forces in the creation of larger, more complex societies with an extended division of labor. Societies with a strong warrior class, a centralized state power and a stable hierarchy succeeded in subjecting other societies. Military societies were based on compulsory coordination. The rulers and the warriors could benefit from a class of producers that provided food and weapon (Andersen 1996:48). The military societies developed strong and extended state institutions as a result of conquest and wars. The industrial societies were based on voluntary cooperation. Power structures were decentralized and division of labor was determined by functions and not by power. Spencer saw history as a movement from military to industrial societies. At a certain point in history the military societies would be transformed into industrial societies. As a result of the increasing wealth and more inter-state trade, more and more groups would be able to accumulate wealth separated from the wealth of the ruling classes. Societies would also become more interdependent and warfare will decline in importance.

The decisive driving force in Spencer's theory about evolution is the mutual struggle for survival among the many human groups (organisms).

While there exist only small, wandering, unorganized hordes, the conflicts of these with one another work no permanent changes of arrangement in them. But when there have arisen the definite chieftainships which frequent conflicts tend to initiate, and especially when the conflicts have ended in subjugations, there arise the rudiments of political organization; and, as at first, so afterwards, the wars of societies with one another have all-important effects in developing social structures, or rather, certain on them. For I may here, in passing, indicate the truth to be hereafter exhibited in full, that while the industrial organization of society is mainly determined by its inorganic and organic environments, its governmental organization is mainly determined by its super-organic environment - by the actions of those adjacent societies with which it carries on the struggle for existence (Spencer 1966:12).

Spencer's point of departure is the Hobbesian problem with the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. In Hobbes' theory the state of nature leads to a state because people have reason and passion for peace.<sup>4</sup> The struggling individuals have certain faculties that enable them to transform their own

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<sup>4</sup> Hobbes writes: "And thus much for the ill condition, which man by meer Nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

situation. By reason and passion they realize that it is in their own interest to transfer power to a sovereign. In Spencer's (and Darwin's) theory these attributes (faculties like reason and passion) and the equality among individuals (they are all in the same situation in the state of nature) are removed, which has some consequences for the theory. Now inequality predominates among individuals. Some individuals, species, races, societies, nations are better equipped than others, and an irreversible process has started: a continuous struggle for existence in which only the fittest will survive.

According to Spencer the state develops when the first permanent chieftainships have arisen. Like Hobbes the state of nature continues in a state system. However, unlike Hobbes, the state of nature in Spencer's theory at the state level compels the states to develop their internal structures, and consequently an evolution theory of state development emerges.

Evolutionism and social Darwinism are not only found in the works of Spencer and Gumpowicz but also in many of the geopolitically orientated theories as we find in the works of Harold Mackinder, Alfred T. Mahan and in Oppenheimer's *The State*. The 19th century theories of evolution and social Darwinism are no longer dominant in these extreme versions. Nevertheless, in various disguises some of the theoretical configurations are still implicit in many of the theories of state and warfare that predominate politics and sociology today and which are examined in this article.

### ***The "new" historical "state" sociologists***

The last category of state theorists to be seen as an alternative to the fusion model is also a very heterogeneous group, which we label the "new" historical "state" sociologists. They include scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Michael Mann, Charles Tilly, Brian Downing, Anthony Giddens, Norbert Elias, Martin Shaw, and Gianfranco Poggi. By stressing warfare, state, and inter-state violence as important features of human societies and development they differ from many of the "classic" historical sociologists such as Montesquieu, Marx, Toqueville, A. Weber, M. Scheler, K. Mannheim, T.H. Marshall and to some extent also Max Weber.

The "new" historical state sociologists draw on several sources in their attempt to "bring the state back" on the sociological agenda. Many of the approaches mentioned in the beginning of this article have directly or indirectly provided a backdrop for the new historical sociologists.

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The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death;" (Hobbes 1991:90).

Realism/neo-realism, the German school (Oppenheimer, Weber, Hintze), geopolitical theories and also implicitly the militarist-social Darwinists are all important sources for the historical “state” sociologists. They combine some of these insights with more traditional social theory. Moreover, they are methodologically historical and comparative in their approach.

In spite of differences these theorists share a common interest in the state, the state system, the impact of inter-state relations on the state-society relation, the importance of war as a force in history with impact on state and society structures and a general attempt to explain social change and stability by incorporating internal as well as external factors. By examining some of the more recent historical state sociologist I shall pinpoint their main ideas.

Theda Skocpol represents a bold and lucid attempt to move the theory of the state away from liberal and Marxist/conflict theories. She argues that both perspectives view the state as an arena “in which conflicts over basic social and economic interests are fought out” (Skocpol 1979:25). The state is a reflection of socioeconomic forces and conflicts. Thus it can never be treated as an autonomous structure which, according to Skocpol, is crucial. The development in Marxism in the 1970s to see the state as “relative autonomous” was not really an improvement. In the last instance the interest of the state was to preserve the class structure and mode of production as a whole.

Skocpol’s main objective is to examine and explain social revolutions and it requires a concept of state. The state must be defined as an entity capable of pursuing its own interests whether in relations to dominant classes within its own society or in relations to other states in the state system. She defines the state as a macro-structure, which properly conceived

is no mere arena in which socioeconomic struggles are fought out. It is, rather, a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations ... Where they exist, these fundamental state organizations are at least potentially autonomous from direct dominant-class control. The extent to which they actually are autonomous, and to what effect, varies from case to case (ibid.:29-30).

The state has two main functions: it maintains order and competes with other states. In other words, Skocpol, inspired by Hintze, stresses the importance of state-state relations and the geopolitical environment.



An existing economy and class structure condition and influence a given state structure and the activities of the rulers. So, too, do geopolitical environments create tasks and opportunities for states and place limits on their capacities to cope with either external or internal tasks or crises ... For international military pressure and opportunities can prompt state rulers to attempt policies that conflict with, and even in extreme instances contradict, the fundamental interests of a dominant class (ibid.:30-31).

Skocpol labels her own approach “realist” or “organizational” because she claims that states are “actual organizations controlling ... territories and people” (ibid.:31). In order to analyze revolutions it is necessary not only to examine class relations but also inter-state relations and relations of states to dominant and subordinate classes.

Skocpol’s project is a syncretism between different theoretical approaches (realism in international relations, Hintze, Weber and a conflict perspective), and she moves beyond the traditional endogenous explanations in her analysis of the French, Chinese and Russian revolutions. However, like most of the historical sociologists, her definition of the state reveals that at a theoretical level she is still locked up in a fusion model. While she claims that the state has autonomous power, first and foremost in relation to the ruling and subordinate classes, she never questions the Hobbesian model. Society still consists of its internal parts, and then a state is created to keep order domestically and defend against foreign enemies. Skocpol never takes the step to redefine the state and the state-society relations in order to escape the fusion model. Moreover, Skocpol never theorizes about war and warfare as such. She just takes warfare as a given fact performed by states. States wage war and it affects the state-society relation, which is about as far as she gets.

Norbert Elias (1897-1990) is a very prolific scholar, but one of his main contributions to social theory is his analysis of state formation processes. In his main work, *The Civilization Process*, (Elias 1982), he gives a historical-sociological account of state formation processes in Western Europe with mainly France but also England and Germany as examples.

Primarily, Elias is interested in the formation of the modern state - a process he traces back to the early feudal period. States have existed for much of human history, but most often he refers to state forms prior to the modern state as rulers, crowns, kings, empires, etc. Pre-modern states and their rulers had the common function of defending against external enemies (Elias 1982:91). Modern states were more unified and stable with more differentiated functions. In his definition of the modern state Elias is inspired by Weber, but he is more concerned about the process of

establishing monopolies and, unlike Weber, he stresses that the defining feature of the modern state is a twin monopoly of violence and taxation (ibid.:104).

In his attempt to understand the rise of the modern state, Elias examines how a fragmented Europe consisting of thousands of rulers and small kingdoms slowly but gradually develops into a small handful of states. In *The Civilization Process*, vol. II, he emphasizes three elements of great importance in this process: the monopoly mechanism, the royal mechanism, and the transformation of “private” into “public” monopolies (ibid.:104-224; Mennell 1989:66). The monopoly mechanism concerns two interrelated processes. On the one hand the monopolization of the means of violence and taxation by one ruler, and, on the other hand, an expansion of territory in competition with other rulers. He defines the mechanism of monopoly formation in the following way:

if, in a major social unit ... a large number of the smaller social units which, through their interdependence, constitute the larger one, are of roughly equal social power and are thus able to compete freely - unhampered by pre-existing monopolies - for the means to social power, i.e. primarily the means of subsistence and production, the probability is high that some will be victorious and other vanquished, and that gradually, as a result, fewer and fewer will control more and more opportunities, and more and more units will be eliminated from the competition, becoming directly or indirectly dependent on an ever-decreasing number. The human figuration caught up in this movement will therefore, unless countervailing measures are taken, approach a state in which all opportunities has become a system with closed opportunities (Elias 1982:106)

According to Elias the world consists of *social* or *survival units*. He does not take his point of departure in a Hobbesian world of struggling individuals but accepts that a primary human condition with a state of nature exists. Here we find a “poor, nasty, brutish and short” life, but it is a condition in which human groups rather than individuals are struggling for life. Each of these social units consisted of people cooperating to find food, create shelter, and defend or attack other units. This continuous struggle between units slowly led to a process of elimination. The units became fewer and larger. The increasing monopolization of the means of violence and taxation were important in this process, and they went hand in hand. “The financial means ... flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation. Neither has in any sense precedence over the other; they are two sides of the same

monopoly” (ibid.:104). The process of monopolization takes off in the late 11th and early 12th centuries and slowly starts to crystallize in the former western Frankish empire (ibid.:105).

Concomitantly with these processes of military conflicts eliminating and conquering the neighbors and the monopolization of violence and taxation we find another process - internal pacification. Fewer and fewer warriors can now use violence to acquire land or solve internal disputes. Nor can they pose a military threat to the king. In the long term it involved societies in which “conflicts between individuals or groups within a given territory came to be conducted less and less with violence” (Mennell 1989:69).

The struggle for life between social units and the process of monopolization are crucial to Elias’ theory of state formation. Moreover, he stresses that these processes cannot be reduced to economic processes or a reflection of the “economic base.” He claims that “economics” and “politics” are often seen as two separate spheres but that is misleading. In Medieval Europe this distinction did not exist. The sword was an indispensable instrument for acquiring land and the “threat of violence an indispensable means of production” (Elias 1982:149). The competition for land - the principal means of production - is both economic and political (Mennell 1989:151).

The royal mechanism which concerns the distribution of power within the state is another element of the state formation process (Elias 1982:161). The two processes - the displacements in the system of tensions between the different social units and the shifts in power between the classes within a unit - constantly intertwine (ibid.:166). During the course of European history a special social constellation developed. The dependence of especially the powerful leading groups on a “supreme coordinator and regulator of the tension-ridden structure was so great at this phase that, willingly or not, they renounced for a long period the struggle for control and participation in the highest decisions” (ibid.:167). He continues

the hour of the strong central authority within a highly differentiated society strikes when the ambivalence of interests of the most important functional groups grows so large, and power is distributed so evenly between them, that there can be neither a decisive compromise nor a decisive conflict between them (ibid.:171)

The social classes (nobility, bourgeoisie, church, peasants, and artisans) tied each other’s hands. Consequently, a strong central authority could develop and reinforce the monopolization processes.

The third element of the process of state formation is the transformation of “private” monopolies into “public.” This is a phase

in which control over the centralized and monopolized resources tends to pass from the hands of an individual to those of ever greater numbers, and finally to become a function of the interdependent human web as a whole, the phase in which a relatively “private” monopoly becomes a “public” one (ibid.:115).

This is a long process, concomitant with the two others. A decisive moment is the French Revolution, but the process of depersonalization and institutionalization of the exercise of power has much deeper roots. After the French Revolution the state becomes more or less fully developed with “public” monopolies of violence and taxation.

In some respects Elias is a radical thinker because he replaces the individual with the survival/social unit as a key element in his analysis. Moreover, his point of departure is not the social unit as such but the relation between the social units, and *relations* are the key unit of analysis in understanding state formation processes. Thus he moves away from the Hobbesian model of a fusion of individuals, and furthermore admits that violence is an important element of this elimination process towards the rise of the territorial state in Western Europe.

Elias has a more explicit theory of war and violence than most historical sociologists. Carefully, he attempts to avoid any innate aggressive instinct or a “will to power” (see Mennell 1989:217-20). He claims that violence is an intrinsic part of human life, and the fact that individuals and states have become more interdependent does not prevent the use of violence as a solution of conflicts. He carries, however, an element of unexplained social evolutionism and teleology because he sees social evolution and the state formation process as a struggle for survival, which as a corollary of his theory is supposed to end up with one single state/society. Clearly, the world has not developed in such a direction. He owes us an explanation of why wars come to a halt and why a world empire has not developed. Also, in the first place, he has problems explaining why the social unit (the group) and not the individual is the key to understanding human societies.

Elias’ historical method is an attempt to apply a prospective analytical perspective, including an attempt to perceive the many uncertainties in the process. Elias demonstrates that it long remained uncertain that the Paris kings would end up as the winner. There was no grand plan or clear direction and it was a process with a lot of contingency. Yet his emphasis on France leads him to ignore several other states which either took different routes or developed into different state forms which, however, declined during the course of history. In the 11th century no one could foresee that France would become one of the great powers seven centuries later. Elias’ focus on the territorial

state form involves a neglect of other state forms. All the processes he studies are seen as preliminary steps to the territorial state. Thus he is still embedded in a teleological framework.

Charles Tilly (1929) is another example of a historical sociologist who has worked with different models to go beyond the fusion perspective. His first major publication on the state problem was the edited volume *The Formation of The National States in Western Europe* from 1975, followed by *Coercion, Capital, and European States* in 1992. Tilly's method is historical-hermeneutic and similar to Weber's neo-Kantian combination of hermeneutics and positivism. He analyzes mechanisms that explain the development of the modern state, but these mechanisms cannot be connected to general laws or a single cause. There is a uniqueness which can only be understood by situating the development of the European states in a specific historical context. Tilly claims that although many other theories in social sciences and humanities contribute with valuable aspects of state formation, most of them are flawed. He expresses his critique very clearly:

Most available explanations fail because they ignore the fact that many different kinds of states were viable at different stages of European history, because they locate explanations of state-to-state variation in individual characteristics of states rather than in relations among them, and because they assume implicitly a deliberate effort to construct the sorts of substantial, centralized states that came to dominate European life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Geopolitical and world-system analyses provide stronger guidance, but so far they lack convincing accounts of the actual mechanisms relating position within the world to the organization and practice of particular states. In particular, they fail to capture the impact of war and preparation for war on the whole process of state formation; on that score, statist analyses do much better (Tilly 1992:11)

Tilly here emphasizes two important problems: A widespread tendency to focus on the state and its internal construction without considering the impact of the state-state relation. Another problem is the neglect of the importance of war and war preparations for the structure of the state. Theories in international relations take this into account, but warfare is usually regarded as a result of the individual state actions - not as a consequence of the very relation between the states. These observations are extremely important and very valuable contributions to social theory in general and sociology in particular. This critique provides the backdrop for Tilly's own theoretical framework in terms of a state definition. He never, however, really gives a clear definition of the state, and his

conception of the state has to be brought together by different elements. I shall come back to this later.

Tilly takes his point of departure in the concept of the individual. Men control means of coercion. These men tried to extend the range of people and resources over which they had power. They became conquerors. Conquerors who managed to exert stable control over the populations in territories and to extract resources, became rulers. Rulers made wars because they now and again faced limits to their rule. War making led to state making. Eventually he reaches the conclusion:

States = coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories. The term includes city-states, empires, theocracies, and many other forms of government, but excludes tribes, lineages, firms, and churches as such (ibid.:1-2).

Like Skocpol, Elias, Mann and Giddens he places the state in a system. "States form a system to the extent that they interact with each other regularly, and to the degree that their interaction affects the behavior of each state" (ibid.:162).

The definition of a state as a coercion-wielding organization emphasizes the institutional side of the state. In order to conceive the essence of state, which in Tilly's universe means the functional aspects of the state, it is necessary to go through some of his basic concepts.

Tilly takes his point of departure in the interdependence and logics between capital and coercion. These two dimensions develop as an interrelated couple. The expansion of coercion is linked to the development of states, whereas capital is linked to cities. He emphasizes coercion and wielders of coercion as the starting point for the process (Tilly 1992). The state reflects the organization of coercion and capital - at least in its most developed form. When concentration of coercion and accumulation merge, an increasing growth of state power will take place.

What processes push the accumulation and concentration of means of coercion? Tilly is unequivocal in his answer that war involves accumulation and concentration of means of coercion and consequently, state formation. How come war has been en generic aspect of the world history? Because coercion works. "Those who apply substantial force to their fellows get compliance, and from that compliance draw the multiple advantages of money, goods, deference, access to pleasures denied to less powerful people" (ibid.:70).

In other words, coercion promotes a compliance, which gives access to resources. This logic seems to be a common feature of the European development. A more specific war-provoking logic

was present: Everyone (i.e. kings, princes, barons) who controlled means of coercion tried to maintain a “security area” and a “buffer zone” to protect the security area. At times they included the buffer zone in the security area, and consequently expanded to maintain a new buffer zone. This logic leads to war and, according to Tilly, this logic has been a generic element of the European history since 990.

Tilly claims that war is the most important activity of the state during most of the history until our time. A general trend has been that the world has seen more wars with higher intensity but fewer wars between great powers. These wars have become even more intensified and cruel.

War has been the most dominant state activity but not the only one. However, the other activities are all connected to warfare. The minimum activities of the state are:

1. State making: The ruler attacks and controls enemies and competitors within the claimed territory. (Here Tilly implicitly accepts that territory is a part of a state definition).
2. War making: The ruler attacks enemies outside the territory.
3. Protection: Attacking and controlling the enemies of the ruler’s allies (inside or outside the territory).
4. Resource extraction: extraction of resources from the population to state making, war making, and protection.

The war initiates a whole range of processes in the state. The state is forced to war making, state making, protection and extraction, otherwise the war/defense capability weakens and, as a consequence, the sovereignty of the state is at stake.

These state functions generate more functions like adjudication, distribution and production of goods. A by-product of the war activities is the development of a number of institutions and organizations like courts, legal institutions, financial institutions, tax administration, regional administration, public assemblies and parliaments. These institutions later became independent forces with their own dynamics in the state and society.

Tilly examines how the forms and structures of the control of the means of coercion changed from a period with small warrior lords and princes and a fragmented sovereignty (my expression) to large territorial domains. This long process bears witness to a development in which the state is strengthened externally by a strong internal pacification.

Increasingly, the state gets control over the means of violence and succeeded in disarming the civilian population and preventing access to weapons. This created a completely new structure of

state and society. The perennial threat from private wars, attacks, internal violence, riots, etc. was reduced to a minimum and the state could concentrate on the threat from external enemies.

War drives the state to an extraction of resources. The state developed financial institutions including a tax and revenue administration. Collecting taxes required extended surveillance and control of the population. Therefore, a huge apparatus was necessary. The tax base was nobility, towns and peasants, and particularly the towns and cities became increasingly more important in time with the development of commerce and the money economy. Here the state could extract many resources.

The evolution of new institutions and organizations usually took place during war time. After the end of a war, it became very difficult to demolish them and slowly they became permanent. Military organizations, revenue and finance, credit and banking and legal institutions must all be seen as a direct or indirect effect of the war making activities of the state.

Like Elias, Tilly stresses the necessity of a relationist model, which is a major step forward. The relations between the units are the entry point to his theory. However, there are some contradictions in his theory. When he defines the state system, he falls back to the realist perspective because the units define the system. "States form a *system* to the extent that they interact with each other regularly, and to the degree that their interaction affects the behavior of each state" (Tilly 1992:162). The quotation shows that the units and not the relations are the defining aspect of the system.

Like most other historical sociologists, Tilly has a problem with his concept of war and the way he perceives war as a driving force in the state formation process. The state is a war making entity, but war is never really explained. He just observes it as a social phenomenon which is always present, as a part of a struggle for life. Apparently, such a struggle cannot end before one state has conquered the globe, but obviously it has not been the case. Why is it that wars stop and the world continues to be divided into a multitude of demarcated states? This is a problem to be discussed in the next section about fission theory.

Finally, among the new 'state' sociologists I shall briefly mention Anthony Giddens (1938) and Michael Mann (1942). The works of Giddens (1985) and Mann (1986;1993) should be regarded as an attempt to criticize the so-called fusion theory in order to stress the autonomy of the state and warfare as a way to understand macro-sociological changes.



They regard state and society as both endogenously and exogenously conditioned. They want, simultaneously, to prove that society and the state condition each other, and that the state has an autonomy which creates a demarcation of society.

Consequently, the state must necessarily be the starting point of an understanding of (modern) society. Thus, in other words, the concept of the state - and not that of society - should be the *point of departure* of sociology. This would enable sociology to pay more attention to the autonomy of the state - an autonomy which exists both in relation to other states, and in relation to the various classes and powerful groups of civil society. Moreover, it is an autonomy that determines the conditions of existence of society.

In their sociological analysis both Giddens and Mann attempt to link both the dual state - with its autonomous power directed both inwards towards the civil society and outwards towards the state system - and the relations in civil society as such. This is well illustrated in Giddens' account of the development of citizenship in the Western European countries in the 19th and 20th centuries (Giddens 1985).

This development is due to a combination of, on the one hand, changes in the state system, and the state's response to that, and on the other, certain classes' demands for influence. The changes in the balance of power within the state system force the state into military reforms if the country has to be defended against external enemies. Internally, the state requires support and soldiers, something that can only be provided if the peasants become liable to conscription. The latter only accept because they are simultaneously made citizens and thus vested with rights. They become stakeholders in the state.

In particular, in their empirical analyses, Mann and Giddens achieve a lot in the development of a fruitful concept of the state, but they do not theoretically transcend the endogenous configuration of the state. Both are very inspired by Weber's definition of the state which regards the state as an institution and a personnel/a stratum of civil servants acting on the basis of values. In the last instance, therefore, the state consists of actions carried out by individuals and/or collectives (which, in their turn, are aggregates of individuals). In doing so, Giddens and Mann still draw on the traditional sociological concept of society which - as repeatedly emphasized - is constituted "from within" and "from below" by the social relations of individuals. The state is a product of history developed over time and reflects the evolution of society. When the state is conditioned by society, there is still no theoretical explanation of why and how the state may achieve its autonomy.

Neither Mann nor Giddens take the last step and draw the full consequence of their otherwise illustrative empirical analyses. The war and the struggle for recognition are conspicuous in the empirical studies as an essential factor in understanding the construction of society and the state. The war (and politics) is regarded as a decisive driving force, and it seems as if war and the struggle for recognition implicitly constitute the state. But with a theoretical point of departure in Hintze, Weber, etc., they come to the opposite conclusion; war becomes the outcome of the action and maneuvers of the state/the state's elite - "a will to power" (Mann). Both Giddens and Mann lack a stronger theoretical understanding of the relation between war and societal development in general, and between war and state in particular.

The inadequate understanding of the state-war relation leads to another decisive, theoretical problem which they do not deal with explicitly. The presence and significance of war to social change is noted, but they still owe an answer to the question of a possible termination of war. The theories of Giddens and Mann admit two possible answers:

1. If the Weberian aspect of power is emphasized in their theories, then war will always exist since it is a general feature of human society. They - Giddens in particular - are critical of Weber's "will to power" as an explanation of the presence of war, but they do not themselves give any reason for the dominating role of war in history. Further, one wonders that if war has always existed, how come that it has not been possible for one state to conquer all the other states and thereby create a global reign and install world peace?
2. If war is the outcome of the actions of states/individuals, then the states/ their elites could terminate war by establishing a global pact. This has not happened. Why not?

They do not follow up this problematique which remains unsolved. The problem of war and their inspiration from Weber concerning the concept of state illustrate that they remain embedded in a fusion theory. In spite of their efforts to break with the fusion theory, they, too, encounter the same theoretically basic problem as the classical sociologists.

In sum, especially the "new" historical state sociologists represent an important, albeit not always successful, attempt to repair many of the flaws in most social theories (evolutionism, endogenous models of explanations, the fusion understanding of state and society, the neglect of the autonomous aspect of the state, the lack of interest in war and warfare, etc.). Moreover, these theories analyze state and society in a historical perspective, enabling us to see how state forms change in the course of history. Sociology has been accustomed to focusing on societies as clearly

demarcated units - the nation-state - so the historical sociologists deserve credit for stepping beyond this constrained idea of the state.

This long exposition of state theories has revealed that a variety of approaches within the social sciences have attempted to overcome some of the shortcomings of the problem of state in the fusion theory. By taking the state-state relations, warfare and external conditions of the state more seriously, these theories have contributed with an important dimension to a more adequate analysis of the state. Also the historical-comparative perspective is of major importance.

Three major problems are, however, still left open. First, the fusion model with the unanswered question of the division of the world into different states and societies and the problem of demarcation are still not approached in any satisfying sense. The theories here presented as an alternative to the fusion theories presuppose, too, that states are separated and can be distinguished from each other.

Second, most of the theories contain a configuration, which implies a struggle of survival, and only the fittest (strongest) will survive. Thus this survival is not necessarily determined by the ability to defend a domain of sovereignty, but by offensive intentions as well. Most of the theories conceive history as such a continuous struggle in which only the strongest and most offensive survive. This configuration runs into problem; it is inconsistent as a theory because it imputes offensive intentions, and because, if history had been a struggle of survival of the fittest, we would have ended up with one world state.

The third problem not addressed by these theories concerns the concept of war. The next section shall briefly deal with these questions.

Before embarking on a preliminary exposition of a fission theoretical perspective it is important to emphasize the role and importance of these various cluster of theories which over the years have challenged traditional fusion theory of state and society. From Oppenheimer, Hintze, Spencer to Elias, Tilly and Mann an important string of social theoretical development can be detected. These theories address the important issues and we need to pay credit to this long tradition. We need to go further, however, and we need to transcend some of their fallacies.

### ***The Fission Theory of the State***

As we have seen, a number of theories seek to go beyond the problems embedded in the fusion model. They succeed in some areas but they do not provide answers to all the deficiencies. In our

search for a theory that goes further and transcends the endogenous conception of the state, we have to turn to a radical alternative - the fission model of the state.

This theoretical perspective draws on the works of G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), C. von Clausewitz (1780-1831), C. Schmitt (1888-1985), and A. Boserup (1940-1990).<sup>5</sup> The very term *fission theory* stems from theoretical nuclear physics and was originally used by Boserup (Højrup 1995). Here I shall only briefly summarize the main points, but a more full and detailed exposition can be found elsewhere (Kaspersen forthcoming).

The fission theory argues that “war” - a struggle of recognition - is the crucial precondition of state and society as such. War is a precondition of the fact that the world is divided into self-demarcated, social (self-conscious and recognizing each other) entities/units. This struggle of recognition, which is a political struggle with war as an ultima ratio, “splits into” various distinct types of states. Consequently, the state is forged in this struggle and is no longer conceived as a fusion of its internal elements or regarded as a creation from “within” or from “below”; it is created from “above” and from “outside.” The state is defined by its relation to another state. The sovereignty and independence of the state presupposes recognition from other states (Hegel 1991 [1821]: §330f). The very *relation* - the struggle of recognition - constitutes the state and, consequently, only the relation between states can be the point of departure for a theory of the state.<sup>6</sup>

The Hegelian notion of a struggle of recognition and Clausewitz’s theory of war form the basis of the fission theory (see Boserup 1986; Højrup 1995). Moreover, I shall argue that Carl Schmitt is a valuable and necessary supplement to the two others.

From Hegel we know that an entity can never become self-conscious recognitive unless it is opposed to another entity - another social entity. As Anders Boserup points out, Hegel is very much aware that the analysis of 'self-consciousness' is not dependent on an inner mental or psychological experience. On the contrary, he claims that "self-consciousness as an inner aspect is only derived from and is based upon an external relationship, a social relationship" (Boserup 1986:923).

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<sup>5</sup> Anders Boserup (1940-1990), Peace and Conflict researcher, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Copenhagen. His most well-known research concerned the concept of Non-Offensive Defence as a strategy to create a disarmament process. This Clausewitz exposition is based on his article, "Staten, samfundet og krigen hos Clausewitz" (State, Society and War in Clausewitz) in C. von Clausewitz, *Om krig*, vol. 3 (ed. Niels Berg) pp.911-930. Copenhagen 1986, and his book co-authored with Andrew Mack (1974/1971 Danish edition) *War Without Weapons: Non-Violence in National Defence*, pp.202.

<sup>6</sup> Here it is worth remembering that also Elias and Tilly argue for a relationist perspective.

Hegel demonstrates that a state becomes a state when it appears in a social relationship with another state. It is exactly in the very moment when two or more states are interacting that they constitute each other as states (Hegel 1991:§330-332).

The argument in favour of it being a social relation is illustrated with the possessive pronoun "mine" as an example. What is "mine" cannot be conceived of without making a distinctive line between "mine" and "not mine". This line must necessarily be drawn externally by someone else.

In order to think the exclusion of others from what is "mine", I therefore have to experience my own exclusion, and then laterally inverse the relation (Boserup 1986:924).<sup>7</sup>

Here we have the explanation the weberian-inspired historical sociology fails to provide. Hegel explains exactly that the concept of state is unthinkable unless we see a state as a part of a social relationship - vis-à-vis another state. Similarly to an individual who cannot become self-conscious and know that 'I' is me before 'another' has recognized me - 'I' - from the outside, Hegel clearly sees that a state can only become a state with a bounded territory when the boundaries of this territory are drawn from outside. The state has to be recognized by another state in order to be a state and vice versa.

Individuality, as exclusive being-for-itself, appears *as the relation* [of the state] *to other states*, each of which is independent [selbstständig] in relation to the others ... (§322) ...

Without relations with other states, the state can no more be an actual individual than an individual can be an actual person without a relationship with other persons [see §322/Hegel's note] (§331) (Hegel 1991:359, §322:366-67, §331)

We have now clarified what determines one of the main characteristics of the state: the demarcated territory. Hegel demonstrates that the borders are always made from outside. His explanation, however, goes deeper. The very relationship constitutes the states. This relationship which is analysed in detail in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* has a very special character: it is a mutual struggle of recognition between two entities - individuals - and it has a fundamental existential importance to these individuals: it is a life and death struggle (Hegel 1977 [1807]:187-188).

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<sup>7</sup> This and the following quotations from Anders Boserup's article "Staten, samfundet og krigen hos Clausewitz" are translated from the Danish version of the text. However, it is also available in a German edition "Krieg, Staat und Frieden. Eine Weiterführung der Gedanken von Clausewitz". In Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker (ed.) 1990. *Die Zukunft des Friedens in Europa - Politische und Militärische Voraussetzungen*. München/Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag.

Although the Hegelian struggle of recognition most often is applied to the relationship between individuals, Hegel is also aware that it can be found at a state level (Hegel 1991[1821]). The theorist who has most explicitly transformed this relationship into a state-state relationship is Anders Boserup.<sup>8</sup>

In its purest most abstract form the state has to be understood as *others'* recognition of it as a fully valid member of a system of states, a recognition which is always uncertain and preliminary. ... Recognition is, also according to Hegelian thought, recognition of the ability of the state to defend itself, to compel respect (Boserup 1986:924).

Hegel's struggle of recognition is a perennial and perpetual life and death struggle. As we see in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel was mainly interested in how individuals became self-conscious subjects, and therefore he concentrated on the process of recognition between individuals. As already mentioned, however, in the last few paragraphs of *Elements of the Philosophy of Rights* he indicates that the relation between states is also a struggle of recognition. For Hegel the struggle of recognition is an infinite struggle. In peace as well as in war the struggle is continuing. It is in the true sense of the word a perennial struggle. Even war itself is a form of recognition.<sup>9</sup> Concerning the problem of demarcation and the division of the globe into distinct states neither Hegel can provide an answer to the question: Why is the world divided into many states? Why is the system a permanent structure of states fighting a struggle of recognition and a struggle splitting up into a number of states?

Hegel provides us with the notion of the struggle of recognition, and this notion enables us to understand that it is a struggle - a relation - between states that constitutes the states (Hegel 1991:§330f). He proves that a state cannot develop from "within" and then enter the state system as fully fledged. In order to be a state, a state can only gain recognition from another state (ibid). Also Hegel provides a theoretical explanation for the problem of demarcation. The borders are constituted in a perpetual process of struggling. The 'Other' determine the borders. However, we have to look elsewhere in order to solve the problem of the struggle as an infinite process, and Clausewitz's concept of war can provide an answer.

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<sup>8</sup> Here I shall stress that my application of Hegel's theory of a mutual recognition between states is mainly based upon '*The Philosophy of Right*' unlike the reading of Hegel made by Boserup (1986) and Højrup (1995) who both are more inclined to draw upon '*The Phenomenology of Spirit*'.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel has some problems, however, because the only possibility of "Aufhebung" (transcendence or dialectical transition) of the infinite struggle of recognition is death or subjugation.

It is important to make it clear that war is a political phenomenon and the *purpose* of war is politically determined. By making the distinction between purpose and aim, Clausewitz can separate politics and war. Politics is the subject of the theory, which starts the war and provides the purpose of war. War itself, however, has its own aim.

The following theory cannot tell anything about the character of the political will involved. It only emphasizes that war is a means, and thus only an instrument of politics. This exposition of Clausewitz's concept of war follows Anders Boserup's interpretation and development of Clausewitz's theory.

The concept of war can be specified in three "layers": the "explosive", the "virtual", and the "limited" (or "moderate") war. Clausewitz himself operated with a theory containing two forms of war: explosive and moderate war. From Boserup, however, we know that a third form can be deduced from Clausewitz' text: the virtual war.

In *explosive war*, there is complete polarity between the two opponents, since both have the same unambiguous, universal, and diametrically opposed end. This polarity involves a displacement of the purpose of politics in favour of the real end of war: winning a victory/avoiding defeat (ziel replaces zweck). It is a true duel on a large scale (Clausewitz 1993:83) in which all means can be used. The aim is clear: to disarm our enemy in order to impose our will. This leads to an explosive and unlimited war where hesitation can mean losses and/or defeat. This state of war is rarely to be found in the real world, but it still throws light on central features of war.

The next form is a modification of explosive war, called *virtual war*. Although explosive war takes place now and then, it does not happen very often. Consequently, Clausewitz needed a concept, which could explain the fact that there often is a stand-still in war. He needed a concept to explain why the polarity between the two opponents breaks down. If explosive war had dominated history, it would follow that a war would never stop before one of the two opponents had been completely defeated by the other opponent because of a complete polarity - you either win or lose. As we know, this is rarely the case. Clausewitz manages to explain the occurrence of pauses in war and the breakdown of polarity between the opponents by introducing two forms of fighting: the offensive and the defensive principles of fighting. The defensive form of warfare is, in principle, always stronger than the offensive war, which explains why wars stop (Clausewitz 1986 [1832]: Chap. 1, book 1: p.15-16). Clausewitz points out that the defensive (D) is stronger than the offensive (O) ( $D > O$ ), but he has no theoretical explanation for it. Here Boserup can be a useful supplement (Boserup 1986).

Boserup's argument of the superiority of the defensive is rooted in the condition that the offensive only possesses means which can be freely mobilized ("the army"), whereas the defensive has not only those but also its own purely defensive forces at its disposal. These forces consist of a series of means that are only raised in consequence

... of the progress of the offensive itself and can only be mobilized by this, such as mountains and rivers, the resistance of the civilian population, and the support from those countries that fear the future strength of a victorious attacker (Boserup 1986:921).

Thus, the defensive has the possibility of strategically combining its bound and its freely mobilized forces, whereas the offensive is only capable of operating with freely mobilized forces in its strategy.

The superiority of the defensive is thus the reason why there may be a real pause, and the length of the pause is conditioned by the strength of the defensive. But during this pause,

... the war is continued as a *virtual* war, for the action of war has ceased, it is true, but the war 'goes on' in a particular sense, viz., as an always present possibility that is only not actual for as long as the conditions of the pause are maintained. The pause is only a precarious, temporary balance, conditioned by the forces keeping each other in check, and thus, therefore, even if the war is only 'virtual', it imposes real claims on the two antagonists (Boserup 1986:915).

Had the defensive not been stronger than the offensive, history would have looked totally different. If the offensive principle of fighting had been strongest, history would have appeared as an uninterrupted state of war that would only have been terminated when the world was united as one global reign.<sup>10</sup>

By developing the concept of virtual war, Boserup emphasizes that the possibility of war is always present but as long as your defence capacity is stronger than the offensive strength of your opponents, war will not be actualized. It will remain 'virtual'.

The *limited* war is the third form where political motives (zweck) are once again brought into the picture. During the pause, war may

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to emphasize that the principle of the superiority of the defensive as a form of fighting does not mean that specific wars are not won by the offensive part. It is always possible for a state to possess so much superior power that the antagonist can do nothing. The defensive war may be too weak or use its means in a bad way. But this does not alter the notion that "the defensive is, in principle, superior as a form of war" (Boserup 1986:918).



... take on more limited forms where the antagonists only go for small gains that offer themselves, and where both parties may be said, in a certain sense, to be in the defensive! (Boserup 1986:915).

Clausewitz's concept of the pause and Boserup's concept of virtual war open up for a new understanding of peace. Peace is here understood as a pause based on the superiority of the defensive. Boserup demonstrates that it is the inequality of force between the defensive and the offensive that makes a "peace" possible during which societal and state units may exist. Boserup's development of the concept of pause and D>O enables him to demonstrate *theoretically* why wars are interrupted by pauses (Ewald 1994).

The concept of the pause can also be seen in relation to Hegel's struggle of recognition. Boserup points out that the pause is the actualization of a mutual recognition between two states (alliances). During the pause a genuine mutual recognition can take place and peace occurs, but it is very precarious because the possibility of war is ever present.

By taking its point of departure in the relations between states, the fission theory explains why states can be seen as "subjects." They are constituted in a struggle of recognition and, according to Hegel, only such a relationship can give them status as subjects. There is no authority above the states, only their own struggle can provide them with status as independent and self-conscious subjects. Without an authority above and without any other entity that can subject the state to its decisions, the state and only the state is an independent social unit - a subject. Any other actors must be regarded as dependent subjects or sub-subjects. The status of armies, people, companies or cities are dependent on a state. (When we find a city with the ability to defend itself and prevent any other city or state from intervening such a city must be defined as a state).

Consequently, the state system is "a theoretical structure of relations of recognition among self-defending and self-conscious subjects ... the 'state' is not only synonymous with modern states. It is used more broadly to connote the self-defending, and therefore subjectivity-bearing, unit by which we imagine all human life to be organized" (Højrup 1995:215). In other words, it is important to notice that the concept of state in this context is not a "state apparatus," but a whole and a unity that includes society. It is not, however, a unity constituted of its internal elements.

The German legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) approves the Hegelian idea that the very struggle between two entities constitutes this relationship and their two identities respectively. Schmitt says that,

... the political entity presupposes the real existence of an enemy and therefore coexistence with another political entity. As long as a state exists, there will thus always be in the world more than just one state. A world state which embraces the entire globe and all of humanity cannot exist. The political world is a pluriverse, not a universe. ... The political entity cannot by its very nature be universal in the sense of embracing all of humanity and the entire world (Schmitt 1976:53; 2002:93-94).

However, he takes this point much further when he specifies that the struggle of recognition is mainly a political relation existing partly among states and partly among persons, groups, or movements in civil society within the state territory. Schmitt argues that the *differentia specifica* of the political is a friend-enemy relation. In a discussion of Schmitt's work, P. Hirst has pointed out that,

... the political exists when differences reach the point where groups are placed in a relation of enmity, where each comes to perceive the other as an irreconcilable enemy to be struggled against and if possible defeated. Such relations are political and possess an existential logic that overrides the motives which may have brought groups to this pass (Hirst 1990:109).

Other areas of society like the economic, moral, or cultural are not a part of politics because they are not characterized by the friend-enemy relationship. In other words, the political struggle creates a division between 'us' and 'them' while the sphere of economics - civil society - is without such a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'. Here we trade with each other. States or companies might compete in different markets or certain groups might argue about moral values, but they will only become politicized and political relations if they turn into friend-enemy relationships.

The friend-enemy relationship is a mutual struggle of recognition, and in this case it means a relationship dominated by reciprocal action in which "one can be driven by the opponent's moves, if one does not anticipate the competition and drive it instead" (Hirst 1990:130-31). It follows that at the most extreme political struggle includes the possibility of war (Schmitt 1976:33-37).

Wars follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequence of enmity. It does not have to be common, normal, something ideal, or desirable. But it must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid (Schmitt 1976:33).

Politics can lead to war. Schmitt takes us back to Clausewitz, where “war is the continuation of politics by other means.” Schmitt, and more distinctly Clausewitz, elucidate the necessity of the means of violence in order to survive as a state at the extreme. Violence and military means can become the ultima ratio of a state. It is important, however, to make it clear that war is subordinated to politics. Schmitt indicates that the political relationship and the realm of politics determine the purpose (zweck) of war. The political can initiate the war, but the very aim of the war, to achieve victory/avoid defeat, is entirely determined by the logic of war.

Schmitt has demonstrated that the mutual struggle of recognition that constitutes the state is a political relationship, and at the extreme this struggle involves the possibility of war. War is the ultimate struggle of recognition, and the independence and sovereignty of a state can be at stake. The fission theory is based on the notion of the state system as a processual structure which divides into individual states. The relationship between states and, in particular, the mutual struggle of recognition between states is crucial in the fission theory. This is the pivot and although the theory is simple it provides us with a considerable insight in understanding some key aspects of the state. The fission theory emphasizes that a state can never be adequately theoretically understood unless it is situated in a relation with other states.

When a state is recognized it is always a preliminary and precarious recognition, and recognition is always at stake. The very struggle always compels the state to provide a defense. Thus the struggle between the states makes heavy demands on each state. The state has to produce a strong political will, economic means and an ideological support from the population. Therefore, the state must possess a society that can provide these means to maintaining a strong defense. Thus the very struggle of recognition and its specific character has a strong impact on the state, the state-society relationship and the structure of the society.

Let me summarize some of the main points so far: I have criticized the fusion theory and the theories analyzed in this article for not providing us with a theoretical explanation of the absence of a world state or a global social contract. By pointing to a fission perspective I argue that the defensive form of fighting, as in principle superior to the offensive, prevents one state from conquering the rest of the world. Hegel provides another argument. In principle a single state can develop but it cannot be a state because in such a case it would presuppose another state to recognize it as a state. The struggle of recognition provides the necessary energy needed to sustain the sovereignty and unity of a state. If a single state temporarily subjects all other states under its domain, it will split up again (a process of fission will take place!). Without an external opponent

(enemy), without 'another' to recognize you as a state (in war and peace!) the state will dissolve into civil wars and conflicts and a number of new states will emerge on the ruins of the former state. A recent example of this can be seen in the American attempt to fight anti-democratic regimes in the name of humanity. If 'humanity' (The US-western alliance) succeeds its mission and subject all other states to its own domain it will crumble as an empire. The external enemy (the anti-democratic regimes) provides the energy to generate cohesion, coherence and a common ideology and political will in the USA and the western alliance. Schmitt mentions that in principle war can disappear and, as a consequence also politics and the state system. In other words, humanity can win! Consequently, a situation will emerge with no state and no politics. Therefore, the development of a world state or a global state cannot take place.

Two important points must be emphasized. The first concerns the problem of some social Darwinistic features and the second the similarities and differences between fission theory and neo-realism in the International Relations tradition.

In this exposition of theories we found that history is seen as a power struggle between states striving for survival, and only the strongest survive. Therefore, the state is imputed offensive or even aggressive intentions in order to expand and subjugate enemies. In the fission theory, however, there is no claim that the states have offensive intentions. They aim to be recognized as states, in other words to remain states, and it follows that in order to maintain sovereignty the state must be able to defend itself. Thus the state has no offensive, only defensive intentions. Of course, we can find individual states that are aggressive, imperialistic and offensive, but this aggressiveness or these offensive intentions are not a necessity of the state. The state does not need to be offensive to survive, but it has to be able to defend itself.

On the surface, there are some similarities between fission theory and neo-realist theory, but the neo-realist theory does not contain a definition of the state. The state is regarded as an undifferentiated unit, which defines the structure of the state system. The states are just fully fledged units entering the state system. Another problem is the "bellum omnium contra omnes." Whereas the fission theory can provide us with a theoretical explanation of how this struggle can be "transcended" in the pause, the neo-realists just claim that "among states, the state of nature is a state of war" (Waltz 1979). There is no solution to the Hobbesian problem of order at a state level. The neo-realists argue that parity in power among states prevents war, but Clausewitz and Boserup have proved that it is the disparity between two states ( $D > O$ ) that creates a pause and "peace." The last point to be made in this context concerns the absence of an authority in the state system. A

theoretical explanation can be provided with help from the fission theory by pointing to the fact that the defensive form of fighting is superior to the offensive. Wars always come to a halt. Offensive and/or aggressive states will always be stopped. No world state can develop. The neo-realists conceive the state system as anarchy, and the fact that it remains anarchy can only be explained empirically. States construct alliances against each other, but the very possibility of a hierarchical order with one authority is present. It is highly unlikely but while theoretically possible within the neo-realist theory, it is impossible from a fission point of view.

### ***The Concept of State - A Reassessment***

I have now examined two types of alternatives to the traditional fusion perspective on the state (on the one hand the German tradition, the Social Darwinists and the new 'state' historical sociologists and on the other hand fission theory). As I pointed out, the first category of alternatives never escaped the problems of the fusion model, but in spite of the deficiencies in many of these theories, they also contributed with some valuable insights into the development of the concept of state. The second alternative - the fission theory - took a step further, but the abstract concept of state within this perspective still needs some elaboration to be used as an analytical tool.

At the most abstract level I draw on the fission theory, where we find a general concept of state, which can be applied across time and space. The state is a political entity defined by its relation to another state. A political entity means a social group in a friend-foe relation. The state is constituted in a mutual struggle of recognition. To maintain the status as recognized and sovereign, the state has to be able to defend itself. Thus in an abstract sense, the state is a defense mode. By defining the state as a defense mode it is assumed that this state has to defend itself against other states and it follows that states always exist in systems of more than one state. In other words, any social group in a friend-foe relation, with no authority above and with the ability to defend itself in a system of other political entities can be characterized as a state. Defense is here understood in the broadest sense of the concept. Only a sufficiently strong defense (military, political, economic and ideological) can guarantee the state membership in the state system.

The state is regarded as a subject because it can defend its domain of sovereignty and there is no authority above. Being a subject in a Hegelian sense implies that it has a praxis, which means that the subject (the state) utilizes and organizes means to achieve its goals.<sup>11</sup> Being a praxis, the

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<sup>11</sup> For an elaboration see D'Hondt (1970); Boserup (1986:920); Højrup (1995).

state involves the activation of material means for specific ends. Thus the state is organizing its means towards its main goal, i.e., to maintain sovereignty and independence.

In sum, the examination of the possible alternatives to the fusion model suggests that the fission theory seems to be the best point of departure for developing a state theory in which state and warfare is related without taking a version of Social Darwinism on board. By defining the state as an entity constituted in a struggle of recognition and thus without imputing aggressive properties of the state we overcome a number of problems inherent in most other theories including realism/neo-realism and historical sociology, but it cannot stand alone. In order to produce adequate and the most appropriate analyses of the relationship between state and society it is also important to include the interplay between state and its internal elements. A fission perspective will, however, always argue that the state-state relation is the point of entry of the analysis. Also, since the state appears here as a general and an abstract concept defined as a defence mode, more work still has to be done to situate into a historical-empirical context.

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